

(E) improve the tax treatment of bad debt and interest deductions; and

(3) the legislation described in paragraph (2) should be adopted by the Congress in conjunction with any financial modernization legislation.

**SEC. 603. INVESTMENTS IN GOVERNMENT SPONSORED ENTERPRISES.**

Section 18(s) of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act (12 U.S.C. 1828(s)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (4) as paragraph (6); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following:

“(4) CERTAIN INVESTMENTS.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply with respect to investments lawfully made before April 11, 1996, by a depository institution in any Government sponsored enterprise.

“(5) STUDENT LOANS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—This subsection does not apply to any arrangement between a Holding Company (or any subsidiary of the Holding Company other than the Student Loan Marketing Association) and a depository institution, if the Secretary approves the affiliation and determines that—

“(i) the wind-down of the Association in accordance with the requirements of section 440 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, will not be adversely affected by the arrangement;

“(ii) the Association will not extend credit to, or guarantee or provide credit enhancement to any obligation of, the depository institution; and

“(iii) the operations of the Association will be separate from the operations of the depository institution.

“(B) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—In approving an affiliation referred to in subparagraph (A), the Secretary may impose any terms and conditions on such affiliation that the Secretary considers appropriate, including—

“(i) requiring the Association to provide a binding plan to dissolve before September 30, 2008;

“(ii) imposing additional restrictions on the issuance of debt obligations by the Association; or

“(iii) restricting the use of proceeds from the issuance of such debt.

“(C) ENFORCEMENT.—Terms and conditions imposed under subparagraph (B) may be enforced by the Secretary in accordance with section 440 of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

“(D) DEFINITIONS.—In this paragraph—

“(i) the terms ‘Association’ and ‘Holding Company’ have the same meanings as in section 440(i) of the Higher Education Act of 1965; and

“(ii) the term ‘Secretary’ means the Secretary of the Treasury.”.

**SEC. 604. REPEAL OF SAVINGS BANK PROVISIONS IN THE BANK HOLDING COMPANY ACT OF 1956.**

Section 3(f) of the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956 (12 U.S.C. 1842(f)) is amended to read as follows:

“(f) [Reserved].”.

**FREEDOM FROM RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION ACT OF 1998**

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report H.R. 2431.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2431) to establish an Office of Religious Persecution Monitoring, to provide for the imposition of sanctions against countries engaged in a pattern of religious persecution, and for other purposes.

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. NICKLES addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. GRAMM. Would the Senator yield?

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I will be happy to yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I just simply want to say to my colleague, Senator SARBANES, and to others who support this bill, that I am willing, and have continued to be willing, to sit down and try to work something out. It may be that nothing can be worked out, but I just want to reaffirm my willingness to sit down with Senator SARBANES, or any other person, who is in a position to work anything out—certainly Senator SARBANES is—and see if we could find some common ground. Maybe we cannot. But I just want to reaffirm my willingness to do it. I have sat down and discussed this with Senator DODD. And I am willing to do it again.

So it may be that there is no way we can accommodate the different views we have, but I wanted to reaffirm my willingness to make an effort again. Though it may or may not prove fruitless, I am willing to do it. And I would like to work something out because, save the so-called CRA provisions, I am for this bill.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I know the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma wants to be heard, but I would just like to pick up on this last point, if I could, if my colleague from Texas would yield—

Mr. GRAMM. I do not have the floor.

Mr. DODD. To say to my colleague from Texas, and others, I didn't have the benefit of hearing my friend's comments from Maryland, but I fervently hope—it has taken almost 20 years for us to come to the point where we are with financial services modernization. And my colleague from Texas has been on that committee for a long time, the distinguished Senator from Maryland even longer and knows the agony we have gone through, Mr. President, over the years of coming close and failing, for a variety of reasons, to be able to put through a modernization bill that would enjoy the kind of support this bill does.

And here we have the world looking to us. You have news today of the yen now having, compared to the dollar in exchange rates, in the last 48 hours, dropped to a lower rate than it has in 50 years—50 years. We have a problem in Brazil of significant magnitude.

It is no secret here that the world looks to us for a sense of confidence. And here we are within hours of leaving this session of Congress with a strong bipartisan bill, led by the Senator from Maryland, the Senator from New York, Senator D'AMATO, the chairman of the committee, with a 16-2 vote coming out of that committee, and 88-11 on a cloture motion.

My colleague from Texas feels strongly about the CRA provisions, and I respect that. But I would strongly argue that there is going to be ample

time for us, whether today or tomorrow, if we can get it done, but if not certainly the next Congress to deal with the CRA provisions.

There may not be another opportunity that comes along to deal with this issue, I say to my friend from Texas. As he knows, we have spent so many years trying to put together—here we are on the threshold of doing something truly significant in this Congress, and as strongly as people feel about CRA, we should never allow that issue here to deprive us the opportunity to send a message not only here at home, but abroad that this country, that this Congress can modernize its financial institutions to such a degree that we send that message of confidence at this critical hour, a message of confidence.

The Democrats and Republicans have been able to come together on an issue that has divided us over the years. So I fervently hope that we will not allow that one issue to outweigh the enormous benefits that this bill offers people at home and abroad when the world financial crisis is literally on our doorstep.

So I hope that either something gets worked out or that those who are for it would be willing to put aside their feelings on the CRA issue until another day when there will literally be dozens of vehicles when that issue can be addressed. Mr. President, I tell you today, there will not be the dozens of vehicles available to us to do what we on the Banking Committee were able to present to all of our colleagues here for the first time in more than two decades, some would argue more than three decades. So the opportunity is here. I just hope we do not miss this.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma has the floor.

Mr. NICKLES. I had the floor, and I think time is running. And we want to get back to our bill. I appreciate the comments that were made by the Senator from Texas, the Senator from Connecticut. And I echo those comments. I hope we can come to a compromise. I hope people do not draw the lines too firm in the sand and not allow us to make some minor adjustments to save a bill that is very important.

Mr. GRAMM. At the risk of overdoing it, could I have 30 seconds?

Mr. NICKLES. I yield to the Senator 30 seconds, but it is my intention to go back to the Religious Freedom Act.

Mr. GRAMM. It is interesting. I know what happens in these debates is we end up talking past each other. But the Senator's statement about “let's leave CRA to deal with next year” is precisely my position. The problem is, the bill has six new CRA provisions. So if we were leaving CRA to be dealt with next year, we would have no dispute; we could debate it next year.

I yield the floor.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. NICKLES. I will yield to my colleague from Maryland for 1 minute and then I am going to return to debate on the Religious Freedom Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair must ask if there is unanimous consent for the Senator to yield, because questions have not been asked. And under the rules the Senator cannot—

Mr. NICKLES. I will be happy to yield to my colleague for a question.

Mr. SARBANES. I simply want to say to my colleague that I listened carefully to the distinguished Senator from Texas and this offer to try to work this out. The fact of the matter is, that colleagues have been buzzing around the Senator from Texas all week, like bees around a honeypot, although I am not sure describing the Senator from Texas as a honeypot is necessarily a very accurate description.

Mr. GRAMM. I like it.

Mr. SARBANES. I think there have been very reasonable efforts to reach an accommodation. They have not really gotten anywhere. If the Senator intends, in the name of accommodation, to make very substantial and substantive changes, then obviously a lot of people are going to have great difficulty with that. We have worked through this issue, and we reached an overwhelming consensus about it. And it seems to me that the effort now to sort of significantly rewrite these provisions is just not going to happen.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I am going to return to debate. And I ask unanimous consent that the hour and 40 minutes that intervened since my previous comments and the time allotted in the discussions and the quorum calls be outside the debate on the entire debate that we have on the religious freedom issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I was running through the potential sanctions, sanctions that would only apply for countries that were guilty of particularly severe violations of religious freedom. And particularly severe violations of religious freedom under our bill means: "Systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom, including violations such as torture, cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges, causing the disappearance of persons by the abduction or clandestine detention of those persons, and other flagrant denials of the right to life, liberty or the security of persons."

And so, Mr. President, we define that. That is really bad the actors. In those cases, our bill says that we would have economic sanctions. I was just discussing those. That would include the withdrawal, limitation or suspension of development assistance. It says "limitation." It didn't say "automati-

cally all of it be limited, but at least some withdrawal or some limitation.

It gives the President the flexibility—a whole range of options. Also it would direct the director of OPEC or TDA or EXIM not to approve guarantees, extensions or credits to the governments involving gross violations to religious freedom.

It also would have a sanction that would allow the withdrawal, limitation or suspension of security assistance. Again, it could be suspension. It could be limitation.

Also, another option would be instructing U.S. directors of international financial institutions to vote against loans to governments involving gross violations of religious freedom.

Another sanction option would be to prohibit the licenses or authority to export goods or technology to governments determined to be responsible for such persecution involving gross violations of religious freedom; another prohibiting any U.S. financial institution from providing credits totaling more than \$10 million in any year to governments involving gross violation as to religious freedom; and one final one prohibiting the U.S. Government from procuring goods or services from foreign governments involved in gross violations.

We have given the President a multitude of options, a range, which could reduce economic assistance or economic loans to those countries. Also, I might mention, we give the President the option to waive these sanctions. We have modified that to accommodate some of the concerns that some of our people have. The sanctions can be waived to further the purposes of the act.

If persons involved—maybe the commission that studied this, maybe it is the Ambassador, maybe the State Department—said, "Wait a minute, some of these sanctions might do more harm than good," the sanctions could be waived. It might result in greater persecution of individual beliefs by some governments. Our Government would have the option to waive these sanctions. Or we modify it to include that the sanctions could be waived for national security interests. We modified that to say "for important national interests" the sanctions could be waived.

We have in this bill an ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom; we have a commission of high-level people appointed by Congress and by the President to study and to make recommendations to the Congress and to the President, the Commission on International Religious Liberty, to make recommendations on what can be done to promote religious liberty worldwide; and we have given some tools and options to encourage positive behavior, positive efforts as well as some punitive efforts to try to modify behavior.

Our purpose in this bill is not to punish any country. Our purpose is to modify behavior to improve religious lib-

erty worldwide. We don't want to be picking up the paper as we did earlier this year when the New York Times, for example, on May 11, had an article that said a Pakistani Catholic cleric was buried. It said a Roman Catholic bishop committed suicide last week apparently to protest religious discrimination. Religious discrimination and persecution must be pretty severe if a bishop would commit suicide to protest the degree of persecution.

Other people have talked about Christians being sold into slavery in Sudan, or other countries where Christians, Jews, or other individuals were placed in prison merely for practicing their faith.

I want to thank again my colleagues who worked with me on this legislation. I mentioned Senator SPECTER earlier. I mentioned Senator LIEBERMAN who has worked with me in countless meetings for hours trying to work out this legislation. Senator COATS from Indiana is on the floor and will be called upon momentarily. No one has worked harder. I told him some time ago I feel that he is one of the best Senators I have had the opportunity to work with, and I mean that in all sincerity. He is a person with very strong religious beliefs and convictions, and his efforts to see this bill pass to make sure that we improve religious liberty worldwide are very much recognized, very much appreciated by this Senator, and I think by all Senators. I also would like to thank my colleagues, Senator BIDEN and Senator FEINSTEIN, who have also worked with us in putting this legislation together.

I want to thank a couple of other people who have also worked in this effort. Steve Moffitt of my staff put in a lot of energy and a lot of the effort. John Hanford has put in years trying to enact measures to protect people who have been persecuted worldwide for religious beliefs. Also, on Senator LIEBERMAN's staff, Cecile Shea has worked countless hours on this. I thank them for their efforts.

I see my colleague from Indiana is on the floor. I am happy to yield him such time as he desires on this legislation.

How much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma has 41 minutes 49 seconds.

Mr. NICKLES. I yield my colleague as much time as he desires.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, first of all, I begin by thanking my colleague and my friend from Oklahoma, Senator NICKLES, for his friendship over the years as a Member of the Congress, in the last 10 years as a Member of the Senate, for his tireless work on a number of important issues facing this country, and for his willingness to take on this issue, as difficult as the negotiations have been, to persevere, to bring it to this particular point. Senator NICKLES has provided effective

leadership and perseverance in resolving what I think is one of the most important issues that this Senate will be dealing with in this session of Congress.

There are many others and I will mention some of those names at a later point.

The United States, which we are privileged and pleased to be citizens of, has long been considered a pillar of freedom around the world. Our Nation was founded by individuals fleeing persecution and discrimination throughout Europe. The founding documents of our country enshrine the value and principle of religious freedom. The very first clause of the first amendment guarantees each of us the right of free exercise of religion and prohibits our Government from dictating or establishing how we will worship and what we will believe.

Freedom of religion is enshrined in our founding documents because freedom of religion is a basic human right. In our country, this freedom is acknowledged as a right endowed not by man, not by those who wrote those documents, but by our Creator. Therefore, they are unalienable and cannot be removed.

Religious freedom is also recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948. That declaration guarantees freedom of religion, including the freedom to choose one's own religious belief, to worship, to observe and practice one's belief individually or corporately. The freedom to practice one's religion without fear of outside intervention is the most fundamental liberty that any human being can possess.

We have a history as a country of concern not only for our own religious freedom but also for religious freedom in other countries. We want to stand as a beacon for religious freedom because we believe it goes to the most basic and most essential of all human freedoms and all human rights.

The cold war brought considerable national attention to the plight of Soviet Jews who faced extreme religious intolerance and persecution. United States concerns ultimately translated into national policy, including the enactment of the Jackson-Vanik law which tied trade with the Soviet Union and other Communist nations to their allowing Jews to emigrate—just one example of how this Nation has translated into policy these basic fundamental beliefs.

By contrast, there has been little focus lately, unfortunately, on some of the increasing persecution of Christians and some of the horrific persecution of Christians and other peoples of faith around the world. As a nation, we have assumed a responsibility, a moral imperative, to raise the basic human rights issues, the basic examples of persecution, to use the tools available to us to motivate change toward these individuals in various countries around the world practicing various faiths. In-

dividuals are persecuted for that belief and that practice.

It is evident that many people—not just Christians, but several faiths—suffer because of their faith. The form that these attacks take can be everything from discrimination in employment, denial of participation in the political process, denial of common rights of citizenship. But these attacks can also take the form of extreme physical harm, torture, imprisonment, slavery, and even death. A fact of our time, the fact of the history of mankind, is that people have been persecuted and are being persecuted for their religious belief and for their faith. There are abuses in many places around the world of people persecuted simply because of what they believe.

Paul Marshall, in his book, "Their Blood Cries Out," effectively chronicles where persecution is occurring. In great detail, he presents a comprehensive view of this problem throughout the world. His exhaustive survey simply cannot be ignored. It is a powerful and persuasive analysis which ultimately begs the question: What will we do? How will we respond? Will we respond? Is there action that we can take?

He talks about offenses in countries around the world—these have been documented—in Sudan, Pakistan, Vietnam, Cuba, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, and others.

In the Sudan, possibly the worst of the offenders, it is not just Christians who have faced persecution, but Muslims and Animists, who have opposed the repressive tactics of the Islamic military regime which took power in 1989. Many Arab Muslims from the north have been arrested, imprisoned, tortured and killed. Christians driven from their homelands to government-controlled areas of the country are forced to renounce their faith in order to receive basic food. Others, including black Africans, are forced to convert to Islam and are even enslaved. All told, 1.5 million people have been killed by this totalitarian regime and another 5 million have been displaced from their homes.

In Pakistan, Paul Marshall describes the problem not as one of state-directed intolerance, but as one due to the growth of militant Islamic forces attacking Christians. Christian Pakistanis often become the victims of murder. The blasphemy law, passed in 1986, requires death sentences to any who blasphemes against the Prophet Mohammed or the Qu'ran. This law has given way to a wave of terror against Christians and other religious minorities.

Buddhist and Christians in Vietnam are subject to arrest and harassment if they are not part of the officially recognized churches. As in China, government control over religion seems due to fear of loss of control over the people. Paul Marshall writes that "priests and pastors are assaulted, harassed, fined, sentenced to re-education camps

and imprisoned. Many die in prison, some of them after torture."

In Cuba as well, the government attempts to rigidly control religion. Churches cannot run schools or use mass communications. They are prohibited from performing missionary work and the distribution of religious material is controlled. There has, however, been tremendous growth in churches in Cuba, primarily in the form of house churches. The Cuban Government has also sought to restrict religion by imposing a ban on the sale of paper, ink, typewriters, computers and other printing device to any religious organization.

In Iran, those who believe in the Baha'i faith are forcibly repressed by the Iranian Government. They are denied the right to assemble and elect their religious officials, their property is confiscated and they are denied basic civil and legal rights. More than 200 Baha'is have been killed in Iran since 1989. Christians and Jews likewise face persecution in Iran, including discrimination, imprisonment, and death. One Christian human rights groups describes the treatment of Christians and Jews as "Religious apartheid."

In Saudi Arabia, only the practice of the Sunni form of Islam is permitted. No public expression of Christianity is allowed. Those found with Bibles or crosses can be tortured and arrested. The Saudi Government even went so far as to demand that a Christian group meeting in the American Consulate be disbanded. Unfortunately, our Consulate obliged them by closing worship service, this in an American Embassy.

In China, the Christian home churches are flourishing despite the Communist government moves to strictly control churches. I trust we are familiar with the accounts of thousands of Catholic and Protestant Chinese who have been imprisoned for worshipping, preaching and distributing Bibles.

This is but a handful of examples of where intolerance occurs around the world. Clearly, we cannot hold each nation and people to the same standard we have in the United States. But neither can we ignore the dramatic, reprehensible, and documented accounts of what is happening.

Yet it is clear we cannot oversimplify the problem of religious intolerance in these and other countries. While persecution in some countries is the direct result of official government policy, in others, persecution is undertaken by groups and individuals, with no attempt by the governing officials to intervene. Further, while some religious persecution is simply part of an overall repressive regime eager to control the lives of the people, other persecution is specifically targeted at religious freedoms.

In addition, the promotion of human rights, including religious freedom, is only one interest of the United States in conducting foreign policy. We also must promote strong relations with

countries vital to our national security and pursue policies designed to promote our economic interests.

Yet as a Nation, especially a Nation with our heritage, we cannot close our eyes to real abuses and persecutions taking place. We cannot stand idly by, complacent, apathetic, pretending to be ignorant. Because we are not ignorant. We must act wisely, but we must act. We need a comprehensive policy which draws greater attention to specific problems and works to change behavior. We must have a balance, always keeping in mind the plight of individuals and the role the United States can play in changing the behavior of other governments. Religious liberty has been our gift from the founders of this country; it is also our responsibility, and our torch to bear.

The Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad issued an interim report in January 1998. That report described our policy goals in this way:

The aim of U.S. foreign policy in this area should be to influence governments, with both positive and negative inducements and through public and private diplomacy, to live up to international standards of religious freedom.

This legislation can, first of all, alert us to the situations as they exist around the world, and then provide us a road map in terms of how we can most effectively address them.

The bill before us, introduced by Senators NICKEL, SPECTER and LIEBERMAN, is designed to promote and elevate religious freedom in our Nation's conduct of foreign policy. My friends on the House side, led by Congressman FRANK WOLF of Virginia, have been tireless in pressing for this issue. I would like to take a moment to give credit to Congressman WOLF who has, without a doubt, been the most persistent and relentless advocate of our taking action to address the problem of religious freedom, together with CHRIS SMITH, and others in the House of Representatives. They have provided the impetus for this action and they have, through persuasion and education of Members of the House, alerted them to the problem that exists and achieved a very significant vote in favor of what was then the Wolf-Specter bill. That bill has passed the House of Representatives and now, in the waning hours of the 105th Congress, the Senate, after exhaustive negotiations, after a process that has gone on for an extraordinary amount of time, finds itself at this place.

Mr. President, a great number of people deserve credit for this work, including John Hanford of Senator LUGAR's staff, Steve Moffitt, and my own very able legislative assistant, Pam Sellars, and others on Senator NICKLES' staff and Senator LIEBERMAN's staff, have worked tirelessly to fashion legislation that will survive the myriad of procedural processes that we have to go through here in order to bring a bill to the floor, particularly in the waning

hours. A great deal of effort and work has been put into making this a reality. I am so pleased that we stand here this evening on the verge of passage of what I think is an extraordinarily important piece of legislation.

This presents a viable policy to strengthen religious freedoms abroad. The bill is balanced in its approach, it is comprehensive in its treatment, and it enables our Nation to custom-tailor our response to religious persecution in other lands. It puts in place measures which institutionalize our Nation's historic principles and religious liberty in our relations with other nations.

We establish an ambassador for international religious freedom to help the State Department in assessing nations which engage or tolerate religious persecution and to help promote religious freedom. We set up a process to ensure that the State Department is adequately focusing on religious freedom issues by requiring them to report to the Congress. Each year, State will issue a country-wide assessment of religious freedom abroad with specific summaries of which countries are improving their records and in what ways our Government is actively engaging to change behavior that is not acceptable.

Most important, this bill establishes an independent commission of experts, appointed by the White House, the House of Representatives, and the Senate, to monitor religious freedom on an ongoing basis and to make recommendations to Congress on actions the U.S. can take in countries when persecution occurs. This is important because this is information that we need. We no longer will be able to simply consign religious persecution and religious freedom to some clip we might read in the paper, or to some report that might come across our desk. We will have a commission constituted of reputable individuals, knowledgeable individuals, who will be able to present to us, on an annual basis, a detailed report of exactly what we are facing around the world. That can be the basis for this Congress and that can be the basis for the State Department and the administration—whichever administration is in power—to take significant action and specific action to address these problems. I think that is the most important part of this bill and the one that will provide the impetus for our taking effective action.

There are a number of other provisions, and Senator NICKLES has laid some of them out—and others will discuss those—each of which is important to the success of this legislation.

On May 14, 1998, the House passed Congressman WOLF's legislation—the Freedom From Religious Persecution Act—by an overwhelming margin of 375-41. Again, I commend my colleague, FRANK WOLF, for his leadership on this issue. His efforts, along with a number of others, have brought recognition of the plight of people of faith throughout the world to our attention.

It is now time for us to act. It is time for us to establish an effective foreign policy which can respond to religious persecution that we find around the world and which seeks to change the behavior of those responsible. I trust that the Senate will follow what the House has done and demonstrate a strong, if not unanimous, vote for this bill.

Mr. President, in closing, I want to quote from the Statement of Conscience, issued by the National Evangelical Association on January 23, 1996:

Religious liberty is not a privilege to be granted or denied by an all-powerful state, but a God-given human right. Indeed, religious liberty is the bedrock principle that animates our Republic and defines us as a people. We must share our love of religious liberty with other peoples, who in the eyes of God are our neighbors. Hence, it is our responsibility and that of the Government that represents us, to do everything we can to secure the blessing of religious liberty to all those suffering from religious persecution.

Mr. President, we in this country cannot begin to comprehend what people of faith in other nations have had to endure. They have had to put their health, their wealth, their family, their fortunes, and their very lives on the line. Many lives have been sacrificed in the name of religious expression, religious belief. The persecution, which takes place in many countries around this world, is almost too horrible to describe. As a Nation, as a people who have been so blessed with the freedom of religious belief, the least we can do is to hold ourselves out as an example and model to many nations around the world, but, more importantly, demonstrate through our policy that this violent human rights issue is an issue that cannot be ignored, sacrificed to trade, sacrificed to diplomatic relations, or to anything.

The basic human right, endowed by our Creator, for freedom of worship, freedom of belief, is something that the world desperately needs, something that we can promote. This legislation is designed to do that. I urge my colleagues to support this bill. I cannot emphasize enough my deep conviction that we must act swiftly on this issue on which our country has, unfortunately, been silent on too long. We are now acting. We have come to that point. It is with great joy, I believe, in our hearts and in the hearts of people of faith throughout the world that the Senate will enact this. Our deep hope and belief is that the President of the United States will sign it and it will become the official policy of the United States.

I yield the floor.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, my colleague, Senator LIEBERMAN, who will be managing this bill for the other side of the aisle, is not present. I yield 10 minutes to my colleague from Kansas.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, tomorrow, our Founding Fathers are going to be proud of us. Tomorrow as we pass, hopefully, this International Religious Freedom Act, they will be

proud of the tradition that we have carried on, a tradition that finds its wording above our mantels here in this hall and says "In God We Trust," a tradition that finds itself rooted in freedom, particularly religious freedom and religious expression of freedom. They will be proud that we passed this act and that we stand—and stand strong—around the world for religious freedom, freedom from persecution, and allow people of conscience to express their conscience and their desires as they see them fit before God.

Today, I stand to support the International Religious Freedom Act which addresses religious persecution worldwide. It is a noble and significant effort to confront an ancient prejudice which permeates societies and produces deep suffering.

I fervently hope that this legislation will be passed for many reasons. This legislation is an expression of solidarity with embattled minority faith communities worldwide. It supports those who simply and humbly seek to practice their religion in peace without crushing governmental interference. It supports those who were commanded to stop worshipping their God and refused. It supports those who fear for safety and even life, yet continue against the odds.

This is a legislative memorial to anyone who has been unjustly imprisoned for their faith, especially for the ones who refused to recant on principle and remained incarcerated for years, even decades. This is a memorial to peaceful believers who presently sit in jails throughout the world for the crime of daring to express their love of God. We put it above our doors in the U.S. Senate. We have written "In God We Trust." Other people around the world sit in jail for uttering that same phrase.

This is a memorial to all persecuted believers who strain towards justice and freedom, and have no advocates.

I admire this bill particularly because it addresses the problem of state-sponsored persecution of peaceful religious groups. This is the most insidious form of persecution. How do sincere people of faith stand against the crushing onslaught of a hostile government? How does an individual, or a small faith community, stand against a national security force? Imagine countries where entire divisions of the national police are dedicated to stalking peaceful people of faith. Now imagine being the victim of this onslaught without any defense or advocates, whatsoever. This is true in communist nations, in developing nations, in ultra-nationalist nations. Bottom line—any individual who dares to stand alone, to stand against a hostile national government for their peaceful faith convictions deserves our advocacy. And this legislation provides tools for that advocacy.

In his 14th-century epic poem, "The Divine Comedy," Dante believes a place reserved in the Inferno for those

who refused to take a stand on the great moral issues of the day. I believe that religious freedom is one of those great moral issues. It is abundantly clear that in some parts of the world, your religious identity is your death-warrant. This is simply wrong and should not be. Knowing the generosity of the American spirit, I believe that we all agree that religious liberty is worth our defense, that our nation was founded on this principle, and that it is central to the core of our American character. This legislation powerfully expresses our national concern for the sanctity of this fundamental right, internationally.

Is religious persecution advocacy our responsibility? It is certainly no less justified than our support for democracy dissidents in China or for Sakharov and Soltzenitsyn during the earlier days of Soviet Russia. There are striking parallels between both movements. Both, upon principle, refuse to bow their knee to the crushing dictates of hostile national governments. I am compelled by the stark image of a lone person refusing to recant a precious belief, and consequently incarcerated for the practice of fundamental rights, including free speech, assembly and association.

This occurs routinely in communist countries and other fundamentalist regimes. There are countless Chinese Christians who have been incarcerated for 20 years and more for their faith. Jail is known as "Chinese seminary" because the government incarcerates so many people for the crime of illegally sharing their faith. In North Vietnam, it's even worse where, routinely, people of faith are incarcerated for 10 or 15 years. But the government does not stop there. Extended family members are also imprisoned, from grandparents and parents, to siblings and children—three generations because of one religious believer.

If we freedom-loving people do not stand for this fundamental principle who will? It is my honor to continue to advance the elementary notion that this is an inalienable right, which no one can dictate, not even a government. It is a higher principle, protected, divine, precious, fundamental, universal and vastly personal. And it deserves our protest on sheer principle, so I am grateful for the advocacy tools provided by this legislation.

Throughout the centuries, many have fought for religious liberty at great personal cost. There is a magnificent cloud of witnesses who look down upon us, their scars bearing testimony to their commitment even to death for religious freedom.

Countless, nameless believers have engaged in tremendous feats of faith and self-sacrifice in the name of religious freedom and conviction. The 6 million Jews of Nazi Europe bear witness in an unmatched way for the sacrifice they made as a people for their religious identity. There are over 200 million Christian believers worldwide

who presently live in nations which are so hostile to their faith that they are in physical jeopardy. The Bahai of Iran, one of the most devotedly peaceful faith communities in the world was racked in Iran with yet another execution last month and 15 more Bahai are sitting on death row presently. The Tibetan Buddhists had thousands of monasteries destroyed, their nuns raped, their Dalai Lama forced into exile, their religion outlawed. The list is long, the suffering is great, and the goodness of their cause resonates throughout these great halls of freedom today.

Religious freedom is a fundamental, universal right protected by treaties and constitutions worldwide. I will continue to stand for this principle as long as people suffer for it, along with the many other Members of Congress who share this conviction. In the face of crushing persecution, in apparent defeat, there is a light that continues to pierce the darkness and it will not be extinguished. If we stand for anything, let us stand with those whose courage is a living testimony to the fundamental freedoms we love so deeply in America. Let us vote "yes" on this legislation.

I urge my colleagues to do so.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, we would not be here today were it not for the tireless efforts of Senator DON NICKLES. Twenty-eight other Republican and Democratic Senators who co-sponsored S. 1868 (which is essentially the pending substitute amendment) and, for that matter all Americans, owe Senator NICKLES and his able staff a debt of gratitude.

Now then, the pending amendment is a modification of S. 1868. I am a co-sponsor of S. 1868, and while I will vote for the pending compromise language, I confess that it does not go far enough for my taste.

To be sure, these compromises were forced upon the sponsors by a White House and State Department who fought us at every step and habitually moved the goal posts during negotiations. The Clinton Administration may prefer that we do nothing, but doing nothing isn't an option.

As you know, Mr. President, the Foreign Relations Committee has taken the lead in several historic steps by the Senate in recent months to advance U.S. foreign policy interests—including passage of a far-reaching State Department reorganization and U.N. reform package and the NATO Expansion Treaty.

Nevertheless, I believe it is obvious that neither initiative has stirred the hearts and souls of the folks back home in churches and synagogues to the same degree as the growing persistent torture and abuse of Christians, Jews and other religious minorities at the hands of intolerant foreign governments.

Americans are eager for their government to help ease the suffering of their brothers and sisters overseas. They are not at all satisfied with the inaction they have gotten to date.

I am sure these people—who are the backbone of this nation—have no quarrel with establishing special committees, or issuing reports, or having high level meetings with church groups. But Americans are looking for concrete action from the State Department and the White House—and certainly, people persecuted because of their faith in foreign lands deserve more than kind words and gestures.

It is important to emphasize that this issue, and the growing concern of Americans, have not fallen on deaf ears in the Senate. The Foreign Relations Committee held five hearings on this issue during the 105th Congress—two specifically on Senator NICKLES proposal. I especially want to thank Senators BROWNBACK and ASHCROFT for using their subcommittees to focus attention on this issue.

I hope every Senator will review the video tape of Senator ASHCROFT's moving hearing on the tragic plight of Christians in southern Sudan. (These innocent people have been brutally tortured, sold into slavery and, in some instances, literally crucified by the radical Islamic government simply because of their faith in Christ.)

The point is this: the vote we are about to take is a test to see whether Senators finally realize that we, as a people and a government, must do more to advance the cause of religious freedom across the globe.

Finally, Mr. President, it is often pointed out—and I believe it with all my heart—that no matter what laws are enacted, religious intolerance will never be erased from the earth. I also believe that the prayers of millions of Americans and other believers around the world will accomplish more than any Act of Congress.

That does not mean we should not try. I hope the President will join with us as we attempt to strengthen U.S. leadership in this area.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, the Senate is debating the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. In its current form, this bill is a careful compromise that has been months in the making. I had serious concerns about earlier versions of this legislation, but I am a cosponsor of today's compromise.

I am confident that we have crafted the right balance among different facets of American foreign policy. Economic freedom and individual liberties are not competitors—they go hand-in-hand! We want nations that are free, that respect rights and liberties, and that have free trade and market economies.

This is a bill that will focus America's attention on the desire to advance religious freedom around the world while doing no harm to America's national security, diplomatic or eco-

nomic interests abroad. This is a bill that will give the President flexibility to craft a complete foreign policy—a foreign policy that does not elevate one facet of our foreign relations above all others.

Religious freedom and tolerance have always been America's creed. Freedom of religion is the first freedom guaranteed in our Bill of Rights. No person anywhere in the world—no Christian, no Jew, no Hindu, no Muslim, no Buddhist, no Baha'i . . . no one—should suffer at the hand of the State for worshiping as he or she sees fit. As a beacon of liberty and freedom, America has a moral duty to speak out against religious persecution around the world and to defend for people everywhere the fundamental right of freedom of worship.

At the same time, this bill recognizes that America bears a heavy and complicated burden of international leadership. Our relationships with other nations are complex, and our policies must reflect those complexities. American leadership is essential for international peace and security, free and open trade, a stable international economy and many other vital matters. Like all leaders, America must balance competing needs, interests and ideals.

This bill gives the President flexibility to use the full power of American engagement to promote religious liberties abroad. America's strong commercial and diplomatic ties with other nations remain our most effective leverage to alter the behavior of authoritarian governments. American engagement abroad acts as a catalyst for change. The United States government cannot mandate religious freedom around the world, but America can lead the world in spreading respect for religious beliefs—just as we used the power of our example and determination to spread liberty, democracy and economic freedom around the globe.

This bill will focus U.S. government attention on religious persecution. It will make religious freedom part of American diplomacy from the training of foreign service officers to the granting of visa requests to the use of our embassy facilities.

This bill also will shine the light of day on countries, or entities within countries, that engage in religious persecution. It will require annual reporting on the state of religious freedom in every country, as well as annual publication of all actions the United States Government is taking around the world to promote religious liberty.

And, this bill establishes an orderly procedure for the President to consider taking targeted, calibrated actions against the most severe violators of religious liberty.

This compromise gives the President the flexibility he needs to conduct a balanced foreign policy.

The President will have substantial flexibility to calibrate the most appropriate action to help change the behavior of the worst violators of religious

freedom, including broad waiver authority and broad latitude to take actions other than sanctions.

Congress will not be required to undertake a new series of counterproductive "mini-MFN" or "mini-drug decertification" debates about religious persecution around the world.

The Commission on International Religious Freedom established by the bill will make recommendations but will have no official role in shaping U.S. foreign policy.

And the President will have substantial flexibility in deciding when and how to identify countries that will be subject to action under this bill. There will be no diplomatically damaging "list" of countries that violate religious freedoms.

Mr. President, this is not a perfect bill. But it is a good bill. Congress cannot, by passing a law, put an end to religious persecution outside our borders. But we can ensure that America speaks out with one voice, with a strong voice, to make clear that we will not stand idle while people suffer because of their faith.

This bill will amplify America's voice for freedom. It will strengthen the President's ability to craft a complete foreign policy in which the whole of America's national interests is not held captive to any single dynamic. Security, economics, diplomacy, trade, human rights, individual liberties—these are all part of America's national interests around the world. We can, we must, promote them all—we cannot afford to sacrifice any interest for any other interest.

When Congress returns next year, we should continue the effort to expand American engagement abroad—by passing fast track trade negotiating authority, by reforming outdated and counterproductive sanctions regimes, by reviewing every international institution in which America participates to ensure they are relevant to today's challenges. And we must strengthen our military, which is the guarantor of our foreign policy. American leadership in all those areas is essential if we are to effectively promote individual liberties—including religious liberties—around the world.

We should pass this bill. And then Congress should resist the temptation to legislate further on this matter in the months and years ahead, and give this comprehensive new framework for religious freedom a chance to work.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, last week, as many of our friends and colleagues began the Jewish New Year with the Yom Kippur day of atonement—in freedom and in peace—millions of men and women elsewhere in the world were suffering for their faith. Mr. President, I believe that our freedom to pray is not complete until all people are free to pray.

I am told of some specific examples which make me appreciate my freedom

and move me to come to the floor today. In Pakistan, a young man faces a death sentence based on trumped-up blasphemy charges. In Laos, ten courageous men and women of faith serve out harsh prison sentences for the crime of meeting for Bible study, an act which many of us take part in regularly. In China, millions of Catholics and Protestants are forced to worship in secret, paying the price of prison, fines, and even torture if they are discovered. Muslims and Tibetan monks in China suffer a similar fate. In the Sudan, Christians and animists are sold into slavery or brutally murdered by an extremist Muslim government.

These things ought not to be, and I believe that silence is no longer an option. We must act, and we must act wisely. For this reason, I join my colleague from Oklahoma, Senator NICKLES, in introducing S. 1868, the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. This bill presents a responsible, flexible structure for responding to violations of religious freedom around the world. It allows for action that is comprehensive but calibrated. It requires consultation with those who best know the country in order to devise the most effective policy. It ensures that the action we take truly benefits the people who are suffering. The only option this bill does not allow is silence.

The International Religious Freedom Act is not merely a short-term reaction to religious persecution. It has been carefully researched and crafted to promote long-term change, not simply to punish. There are numerous provisions for training our front lines in human rights policy—Foreign Service officers, ambassadors and refugee and asylum personnel. It incorporates religious freedom into numerous long-term avenues for change, such as broadcasting, Fulbright exchanges and legal protections for religious freedom.

This bill has strong support from a broad base of religious and grassroots organizations. With my colleague DON NICKLES, we have listened to all who desired to contribute, and have worked with both sides of the aisle to address areas of concern. This bill is truly a collaborative product of countless hours of work among members of the Congress and the administration.

As Americans, we prize the right to freedom of religion. Our founding fathers sought to establish, as George Washington, said, "effectual barriers against the horrors of spiritual tyranny, and every species of religious persecution."

We now have an historic opportunity to act on behalf of millions of religious believers around the world who cannot speak for themselves. We have a solemn responsibility to stand by those suffering for their faith. I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill. It is the right thing to do.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise to speak in favor of the bill, as modified, before us. I cosponsored S. 1868, the "International Religious Freedom

Act", sponsored by the honorable Senator from Oklahoma because I have become concerned with the trends or continued policies of religious discrimination and persecution in certain countries. I applaud his efforts to work with all interested parties in forming a consensus bill with 29 cosponsors—one that even prior opponents can support. He has been persistent in his efforts to form a bill that addresses the legitimate concerns of most of the bill's previous detractors, including the Administration. I must also commend the senior Senator from Pennsylvania for focusing Congress' attention on this important issue.

I feel it is extremely important, as a nation that firmly believes in the freedom of an individual to practice his or her religious belief, that our foreign policy reflect and promote this basic right of individuals. The manner in which we deal with other nations should include, but not be exclusive to, the way these nations honor the religious liberty of their citizens and visitors. I believe this bill as amended, strikes a responsible balance between the national security or economic interests, and the importance America places in the freedom of religious thought and practice for all throughout the world. The goal of promoting religious liberty in other countries is entirely consistent with the United States' policies of promoting human rights and democracy throughout the world.

Many Europeans first settled this continent for the very reason of gaining freedom of religious thought and practice. We can look to William Penn as just one example of an individual in American history that strove to promote the rights of individuals to practice their religion without interference. His goal was to create a land of religious toleration—that land was called Pennsylvania. He even drew up Pennsylvania's colonial Constitution, which included in its first article the protection of the freedom to worship according to one's own conscience. To this day, America continues to be a beacon to the world, guaranteeing the freedom to worship as one desires.

As a nation founded on Judeo-Christian principles, it especially saddens me when I learn about the increase in the persecution of Christian individuals worldwide. However, it is not just Christians in certain parts of the world that are being punished simply because of their beliefs—it is also those who practice Islam, Judaism, and just about every other religion or belief. Our Founding Fathers made it clear in the Declaration of Independence that the basic Laws of Nature and of Nature's God are entitled to all individuals. This guiding document, a unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America, says that:

... all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The ability to practice ones religious beliefs without undue government interference is a fundamental right—an unalienable right. The American Founders believed in this right so much that they included the freedom to exercise one's religion in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America. The basic right to the freedom of thought, conscience and religion has also been declared by many other countries, as evidenced by the member signatories of the Helsinki Accords and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

I believe this legislation will promote ideals that America stands for—specifically the freedom of religion—in the international community. This bill is especially important because religious persecution takes many forms and even seems to be on the rise in some parts of the world. The bill before us will deal with countries that disregard the basic right of individuals to believe as they choose in a manner that is consistent, yet flexible—one that allows the President to choose from a variety of measures to address the injustices of the violating country. It allows a flexible response from the Administration, which recognizes that religious persecution takes many different forms, with varying degrees of severity. The bill's flexibility also recognizes the importance of a foreign policy that can be both pro-active and reactive to our national security and economic interests. The one action in dealing with violators of religious freedom that would not be allowed by this bill would be that of inaction or silence. If we, as defenders of freedom, are silent in matters so fundamental to our political belief system as religious liberty, then we are no better than the perpetrators of this unjust persecution and discrimination. This bill would help create a consistent U.S. foreign policy with respect to how we deal with countries that do not respect individuals' freedom of thought and conscience. I urge my colleagues to join with me and the 28 other cosponsors to vote in favor of this bill.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I yield my colleague from Minnesota 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. GRAMS. Thank you very much, Mr. President, and I thank Senator NICKLES also.

Mr. President, I rise to support the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. While I continue to have serious questions about the general concept that threatening to impose sanctions on a country considered a "country of particular concern" will enable us to make progress toward ending religious persecution, I have co-sponsored this legislation, considerable progress has been made to redraft the legislation in a far more positive manner. Since it has significant support, it was important to ensure we will pass a version



that had a better chance to work—not one that could have been counterproductive.

The Nickles compromise to the Wolf-Specter version I believe is far superior, and has addressed the concerns of many religious leaders. There was a fear the original legislation could have actually harmed believers in other countries. Let me repeat—those who served as missionaries and promoters of religious freedom abroad told me this legislation could actually have been counterproductive. In fact, some of them questioned a government involvement in this debate at all, other than through normal diplomatic efforts—or, even better than the efforts of religious leaders and missionaries themselves, who have been able to make progress on their own.

Yet, many Washington stakeholders, supported an approach, to publicly humiliate and punish countries which meet our definition of “a country of particular concern” that is engaging in “particularly severe violations” of religious persecution by publishing a list of them and imposing automatic sanctions.

Mr. President, I didn't believe this approach would work. I didn't believe that this was the right way to address religious persecution. Fortunately, many religious leaders have stepped forward, often severely criticized, to tell us they did not believe the original approach was the right approach.

Senator HAGEL and I asked the Foreign Relations Committee to hold a hearing on the legislation, a hearing that would allow some of those who believed the legislation could have been counterproductive to testify. It is ironic that when we sought changes to the legislation, again changes suggested by those who had served abroad, I was publicly attacked by some individuals claiming to understand how best to address religious persecution. And some of these individuals, I believe, may have placed their own personal agendas ahead of the very people that we, through this bill and this legislation, want to help in these countries.

Mr. President, I strongly commend my colleague, Senator NICKLES, for his understanding, his patience and his dedication to work with us on this legislation. I know he made many revisions to the bill which were recommended by myself and others that we thought would help change the focus from an approach that was more negative to one that was very positive and had a better opportunity to work.

There is far more emphasis now on working with countries, working with them quietly to try to end those violations of religious freedom, and to working with our allies in order to try to reach multilateral solutions rather than a far less effective unilateral approach and solution.

The revised Nickles substitute before us, I think, gives the President more flexibility regarding how efforts to achieve religious freedom are reported

and that we talk not only about the progress that must be made, but also the progress that has been made. The report that discusses the progress that needs to be made is less inflammatory and it does not link any suggested sanctions to each country of particular concern.

The President's waiver authority has been also expanded to permit a waiver if an action, including sanctions, would be counterproductive. And just this week the waiver authority has been further expanded to a national interest waiver which is significant progress, I believe, to improve this bill. A waiver could be communicated to Congress the same day it is exercised rather than the earlier notice requirement.

One concern of mine, however, does still remain, and it relates to the commission which provides its own report on religious freedom. While the commission should be advisory using, I believe, detailed employees from the Government, language was added late in the negotiations that awarded the commission \$3 million for each of the 2 years for its own staff. That is a lot of staff when “free” staff was available.

Now, I agree that the commission needs some autonomy, but in my judgment this could further politicize the commission, which would make it less effective. But I am pleased that Senator NICKLES added my requirement that commission members must have some direct experience abroad in order to be appointed to the commission. We must have a commission with members who have direct knowledge of religious freedom issues in targeted countries, those who have been there, those who know the problems that these people could face in the form of any kind of retribution toward any US government action taken.

I was also pleased that language was added to track some of Senator LUGAR's Sanctions Reform Act in several sections of the bill. Those were the provisions that would require consultation with interested parties in order to achieve a multilateral solution as well as an analysis of whether an action would achieve the purpose of promoting religious freedom, whether it would be counterproductive, and what the cost would be of that action to the rest of the economy.

Because so many changes were made to improve this legislation and because so many wanted to support some kind of bill, I worked very hard with Senator NICKLES and others to improve the bill. I now believe that we must also exercise our oversight function over the commission as well as the overall approach of this legislation in the years ahead. We must continue to ask ourselves whether this kind of public approach really works. We must consider whether we want a commission or our Government deciding what religious persecution is, which religions are we going to help, and which ones will we ignore, and which countries we will label a “country of particular con-

cern,” and which will escape that designation for some foreign policy reason. Where will we draw the line? Will we factor in every kind of discrimination against religion, including many we may have questions about? Will we be drawn into disputes with other countries that question why they were named and not other equally violative countries?

Mr. President, we will need to monitor its results, and we need to do that in order to make sure that it accomplishes its purpose. There may be some fine tuning that we need to do to the bill to improve it to make it work better.

This is a dangerous area in which we are treading. It is full of pitfalls, I believe, but I think we can overcome them if we are ready and willing to have oversight authority. My support of the revised Nickles bill is based on that willingness to see how this approach works, but we must pay attention to how it is working and to have the good sense to end it if it is not.

As we exercise our oversight over this legislation, I ask my colleagues also to listen to the advice of The Reverend John N. Akers, of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Chairman of the East Gates Ministry International. He has been very helpful in forwarding concerns of missionaries serving abroad. Dr. Akers, who also testified before the Foreign Relations Committee, requested in a September 28 letter to my office, “Do all you can to ensure that the final version will help religious believers in other countries and not actually, if unintentionally, make their situation worse.”

Mr. President, this is good advice, and it shall dictate how I personally analyze the success or failure of this legislation.

But tonight I want to urge all my colleagues to strongly support this as a beginning. Again, I thank Senator NICKLES for all the hard work to get us to this point on this legislation.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Minnesota for his leadership on this, for his willingness to meet with us for hours to work out some of the concerns that he had, the latest concern he mentioned being where some people who are in foreign countries who are missionaries wanted to make sure this wouldn't have a counterproductive effect. We actually put in a waiver of any sanction that could be imposed if the administration felt like it would be counterproductive to the goals and purposes of the act.

Again, I thank my colleague, Senator GRAMS from Minnesota, for his willingness to work with us, to cosponsor this legislation.

Mr. President, I did not do this at the beginning of the debate and I should have. I ask unanimous consent to, in addition to myself and Senator LIEBERMAN, have the following Senators be included as original cosponsors of this bill: Senators MACK, KEMPTHORNE, CRAIG, HUTCHINSON, ENZI,



HELMS, SESSIONS, FAIRCLOTH, ALLARD, DEWINE, BROWNBACK, INHOFE, COATS, COLLINS, HUTCHISON, LOTT, COVERDELL, AKAKA, ASHCROFT, SANTORUM, BREAUX, HAGEL, GRAMS, SPECTER, MCCONNELL, D'AMATO, HOLLINGS, and Senator SMITH from New Hampshire.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I also have a list of organizations, religious organizations that have been supporting this bill and endorse this bill. I will name those for the record: Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Association of Evangelicals, the International Fellowship of Jews and Christians, the Christian Coalition, the Anti-Defamation League, the National Jewish Coalition, the American Jewish Community, the Catholic Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men's Institutes, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, United Methodist Church Women's Division, American Coptic Association, Episcopal Church, Advocates International, Traditional Values Coalition, Justice Fellowship, and B'nai B'rith International.

Mr. President, how much time remains on both sides on the bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SESSIONS). The Senator from Oklahoma has 7½ minutes and the opposition has 75.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, several colleagues have requested time to speak. I also know we went a little bit later than anticipated. Most of the colleagues on my side of the aisle have spoken. I know Senator LIEBERMAN is returning to the floor momentarily and wishes to speak. So I reserve the remainder of time on our side and ask colleagues, if they wish to speak, to please come to the floor and do so. If not, we will be happy to accommodate requests of other colleagues who wish to speak as in morning business.

Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent we, Senator LIEBERMAN and I, have 5 minutes to speak prior to the vote tomorrow morning. That will be at 9:25.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent I be allowed to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### SUPPORT OF THE AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise tonight to express my grave disappointment of President Clinton's decision to veto the 1998 Agriculture Appropriations conference report, which includes emergency relief for farmers around the country, like those farmers in the Red River Valley area of my home state of Minnesota, who are struggling against a combination of devastating factors.

Inclement weather, low prices, high market yields generally, and multiple years of wheat scab disease have converged to produce an atmosphere where even the best, most competitive farmers in Northwestern Minnesota are suffering.

This, despite the fact that the Market Transition Payments in the FAIR Act have provided our nation's producers with a much greater safety net than the deficiency payments they would have received under the old program—about \$7.5 billion more under the new farm bill than the old.

Yet the President's actions will delay this important relief. This bill provides twice as much assistance as he originally requested, yet he has now joined the bidding war, changed his mind and now jeopardizes this needed assistance to our farmers.

It is crucial for farmers in Minnesota, as well as other states, that the Agriculture Appropriations bill be signed by the President and not used as a pawn in a political debate. The bill funds all of our agriculture programs including \$675 million to Plains farmers to help offset crop failures, like those caused by the wheat scab epidemic.

It also includes \$1.65 billion which is to be added to the annual market transition payments—this money will help to address depressed commodity prices.

The conference report funds \$56 billion to fund needed agriculture programs. This includes funds for many crucial tools to help our farmers promote their commodities at home and throughout the world.

The bill funds the Farm Service Offices in our states to aid farmers in making the adjustment to Freedom to Farm.

It also funds the Foreign Agricultural Service, which promotes U.S. agriculture products abroad. The Service coordinates CCC Export Credit Guarantee Programs; PL-480; Export Enhancement; and the Market Access Program.

The bill will continue and expand needed assistance to farmers in the long term, as well as the short term. It is a good compromise. I voted for the conference report although there are sections that I, like many, oppose, such as language from an earlier House version which would create a backdoor extension of the Northeast Interstate

Dairy Compact. I raised some strong objections to this political maneuvering on the Senate floor last week.

It will allow an unjustifiable, reprehensible program to continue for another six months.

While I have deep reservations, this compromise is one we should continue to support and one the President should sign.

Some say this compromise does not include enough to address the farm crisis. Yet, this conference report provides over \$4.2 billion in farm relief money. This is money that will be available immediately to farmers.

This is in addition to the regular AMTA payments—that is the marketing transition support payments which have provided roughly \$17.5 billion to farmers over the last two years. This is also in addition to approximately \$4 billion that producers will receive in loan deficiency payments this year.

Both Democrat and Republican plans were debated thoroughly in Committee, and the plan before the President is the one that the Members decided to support. The concept behind this agreement is that it continues to support farmers through the transition from the old failed system of our farm program to the new Freedom to Farm legislation, as well as to address needs created by weather and disease disasters.

It does not attempt to throw another net of Washington programs over our farmers.

Despite the partisan grandstanding you have heard, the plan before us will provide the transition assistance that our farmers need. And it will not undo the Freedom to Farm policy that we worked so hard to achieve.

Farmers in Minnesota have made it clear to me that they do not want welfare. The relief plan currently in the Agriculture Appropriations report avoids going in that direction. It is a one-time support package, as opposed to returning to our failed agriculture policies of the past. It also avoids the flaw of lifting the loan caps, a move that would both exacerbate the current grain glut and also distort market signals, encouraging excess production, which would continue low prices.

It is painfully clear by this point that the only purpose served by promoting "lifting the loan caps" is one of grandstanding, and we all know that a higher loan rate leads both to increased production, larger surpluses along with lower prices.

This option again was rejected by the Senate, Senate twice, yet it keeps coming back, rearing its ugly head.

There is simply no justifiable basis for a Presidential veto of the Agriculture Appropriations bill.

As we have heard Chairman COCHRAN explain here on the floor, it contains a lot of money for production agriculture. So a threatened veto is certainly not about money—it is about politics.